

V. REFUGEE SOCIAL SERVICES

A. Introduction

Refugee Social Services (RSS) is the name for any number of services that may be provided to refugees under part 400.140-400.156 of title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations. These services are meant to help the refugee in the transition to life in the United States. The primary emphasis of the program is to foster the idea of personal responsibility and to promote the economic self-sufficiency of each refugee as soon as possible. For this reason, employment related services are given first priority. However, any number of services may be used to help bring about the self-sufficiency of refugees, who in many cases have gone through significant hardship and deprivation in the months and years prior to their arrival in America.

The Office of Newcomer Services regards successful refugee resettlement to be a continuum - involving the efforts of many actors working cooperatively over a period of time - which leads from the refugees' initial arrival into Virginia to self-sufficiency, and ideally citizenship and full participation in the communities in which they reside. An array of service programs is available to refugees at various stages along this continuum.

Virginia's case managed and family based approach to the RSS program is designed to ensure that the special needs of each refugee are met in the resettlement process. The primary goal in providing these services, however, is to foster the social and economic self-sufficiency of refugees as soon as possible following their arrival. This is accomplished through the Comprehensive Resettlement Plan, which is the primary mechanism for accomplishing refugee self-sufficiency in Virginia.

B. Eligibility & Time Limits

1. Immigration status

- a. Eligibility for RSS is only for those refugees who meet the requirements for one of the categories described in section I.C of this manual.
- b. The individual's status must be verified through INS documentation, which is presented during the initial meeting with the case manager (see *Appendix A* for examples of appropriate documentation). Victims of trafficking need only

submit their certification letter or letter for children issued by the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

2. Age

- a. A refugee must be age 16 or older in order to be the direct recipient of services through the RSS program.
- b. *Note:* Refugees who qualify for the Refugee Unaccompanied Minors program are treated separately in section VI of this manual.

3. Student status

- a. In order to qualify for services, the refugee must not be enrolled as a full-time student in an elementary or secondary school.
- b. However, a refugee who is a full-time student and age 16 or above may receive services to assist in finding part-time or temporary employment. This can include summer work or a part-time job while still in school.
- c. Services may also be used to prepare the refugee for permanent employment following graduation.

4. Time Limits

- a. Service providers should concentrate their services, resources, and funding on refugees who have been in the United States for less than 12 months. However, a refugee is eligible to receive social services for up to 60 months, as established by 45 CFR 400.152.
- b. Citizenship and naturalization services, along with referral and interpreter services, may extend past this 60-month limit.
- c. The Office of Newcomer Services monitors providers to ensure that individuals who have arrived within the past 12 months are receiving priority for services. Additional services are provided to individuals or families who have not reached durable self-sufficiency in the first year for up to an additional 24 months. Some discretionary projects may serve refugees beyond this point.
- d. Any long-term vocational, educational, or other training programs should be designed to lead the refugee to

employment within the first year following arrival (and should be concurrent with employment).

C. Priority in Providing Services

1. **Except in extreme circumstances, Virginia provides services to individuals and families in the following order of priority:**
 - a. All newly arriving refugees during their first year in the U.S. who apply for services.
 - b. Refugees who are receiving cash assistance.
 - c. Unemployed refugees who are not receiving cash assistance.
 - d. Employed refugees in need of services to retain employment, achieve job upgrades, or attain economic independence
2. **Note:** Refugee women must receive the same opportunities as men in these services, including job placement programs.

D. Services Available

1. Refugee Social Services (RSS) in Virginia

- a. 45 CFR 400.154 & 400.155 list all of the possible services that states may choose to provide to refugees with the federal funding that they receive each year for RSS. Though Virginia provides a number of these services to refugees in many parts of the state, the Office of Newcomer Services (ONS) considers the strengths and resources of each local community when making decisions about the allocation of RSS dollars. ONS strives to ensure that refugees have available to them the highest quality of services from the communities which will become their new homes. These services are an important aspect of each refugee's Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP). The focus at all points in the plan is on how these services will assist refugees to become self-sufficient and contributing members of their communities as rapidly as possible.
- b. Virginia's refugee resettlement program negotiates and executes interagency agreements and contracts with public and private agencies, directing RSS funds to the local communities where refugees reside. ONS issues Requests for Proposals for various types of refugee resettlement services and contracts with the programs that are most responsive to the resettlement program model (see section II of this manual). Preference is given to coalitions of providers or partnerships, which have the

capacity to provide services described below in a seamless and non-duplicative service delivery system to refugees.

2. Description of Possible Services:

(The following list [a-o] is from 45 CFR 400.154 & 400.155.)

- a. *Employment services*, including development of a family self-sufficiency plan and an individual employability plan, world-of-work and job orientation, job clubs, job workshops, job development, referral to job opportunities, job search, and job placement and follow-up.
- b. *Employability assessment services*, including aptitude and skills testing.
- c. *On-the-job training*, when such training is provided at the employment site and is expected to result in full-time, permanent, unsubsidized employment with the employer who is providing the training.
- d. *English language instruction*, with an emphasis on English as it relates to obtaining and retaining a job.
- e. *Vocational training*, including driver education and training when provided as part of an individual employability plan.
- f. *Skills recertification*, when such training meets the criteria for appropriate training in Title 45, section 400.81(b) of the Code of Federal Regulations.
- g. *Day care for children*, when necessary for participation in an employability service or for the acceptance or retention of employment. Also when necessary for participation in a service other than an employability service.
- h. *Transportation*, when necessary for participation in an employability service or for the acceptance or retention of employment. Also when necessary for participation in a service other than an employability service.
- i. *Translation and interpreter services*, when necessary in connection with employment or participation in an employability service. Also when necessary for a purpose other than in connection with employment or participation in an employability service.

- j. *Case management services*, as defined in 45 CFR 400.2, for refugees who are considered employable under 45 CFR 400.76, and for recipients of TANF – and General Assistance (GA) where available – who are considered employable, provided that such services are directed toward a refugee's attainment of employment as soon as possible after arrival in the United States. Also when necessary for a purpose other than in connection with employment or participation in employability services.
 - k. *Assistance in obtaining Employment Authorization Documents*.
 - l. *Information and referral services*.
 - m. *Outreach services*, including activities designed to familiarize refugees with available services, to explain the purpose of these services, and facilitate access to these services.
 - n. *Social adjustment services*, including:
 - (1) *Emergency services, as follows*: Assessment and short-term counseling to persons or families in a perceived crisis; referral to appropriate resources; and the making of arrangements for necessary services.
 - (2) *Health-related services, as follows*: Information; referral to appropriate resources; assistance in scheduling appointments and obtaining services; and counseling to individuals or families to help them understand and identify their physical and mental health needs and maintain or improve their physical and mental health.
 - (3) *Home management services, as follows*: Formal or informal instruction to individuals or families in management of household budgets, home maintenance, nutrition, housing standards, tenants' rights, and other consumer education services.
 - o. *Citizenship & naturalization services*, including English language training and civics instruction to prepare refugees for citizenship; application assistance for adjustment to legal permanent resident status and citizenship status; assistance to disabled refugees in obtaining disability waivers from English and civics requirements for naturalization; and the provision of interpreter services for the citizenship interview.
3. **Discretionary money** – The Office of Newcomer Services receives, both currently and historically, discretionary grants from the Office of Refugee Resettlement for various types of social

service programs that will benefit refugees throughout the state. Typically, these funds are aimed at strengthening economic self-sufficiency, family stability, or community integration for the refugees living in Virginia. These grants have allowed ONS and its contract service providers to be more flexible and creative in order to meet critical needs that are not covered by other funding sources. One recent example is the Refugee Elderly Assistance Program [REAP], a project designed to meet the special needs of refugees who are age 60 or older and who may have a more difficult time becoming self-sufficient.

E. Service Delivery

1. Case Management and the Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP)

- a. Upon the refugee's arrival, a case manager is assigned to be a central point of contact and accountability for each refugee or refugee family. The case manager, along with the refugee's sponsor, are to guide the individual or family throughout the process of assimilation with the goal of leading the refugee and/or the entire family toward the earliest possible achievement of economic self-sufficiency.
- b. The case manager should begin this process by assessing the refugee/refugee family's overall needs, past experiences, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, interests and aptitudes, present skills and abilities, previous education and work experience, and potential barriers to self-sufficiency. These should be considered, along with the personal goals of the individual and each family member, then matched with local community resources in order to develop a Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP).
- c. Because employment is perhaps the most important factor leading to self-sufficiency, the CRP should be designed as a road map for how the individual in a refugee home in which at least one person is employable will arrive at and maintain employment. The CRP should have as a goal the avoidance of public assistance if at all possible, using transitional cash (RCA) and medical assistance (RMA) only when necessary.
- b. Title VI & Persons with Limited English Proficiency
 - 1) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965 requires that agencies and service providers offer language assistance in order that refugees may have meaningful access to the full spectrum of

services, resources, and programs that are available to them. This is particularly crucial for the case manager who serves as the main point of contact and accountability for the refugee. Therefore, ONS requires that the staff of Virginia's service providers be culturally and linguistically compatible with the refugee populations that they serve.

- 2) Please refer to section II.E.1 of this manual for a full explanation of the expectations of those who work in some way with refugees.

c. Documentation and Data Collection

- 1) ONS requires that a case file be kept for each refugee (though they may be organized by refugee family), which records vital information about the individual. Case files must be kept up-to-date and accessible.
- 2) The following items, which collectively form the basis of the Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP), should be in the caseworker's file for each refugee:
 - Alien number and a copy of documents used for verification of refugee status (or as a victim of trafficking) needed for eligibility into the program
 - Date of entry into the U.S. and to the locality if different from the U.S. entry date
 - Name of the sponsoring family or voluntary agency and the responsibilities of the family/voluntary agency in the resettlement of the case as specified in the CRP
 - Nationality
 - List of demographic data, including case member names and the relationship to the case, address of the client, telephone number, etc.
 - Social Security Number of each case member
 - Documentation of cash assistance utilization and type of assistance
 - The initial assessment of each refugee member of the case, including employability needs, language proficiency, skills re-certification and training needs
 - Contacts and meetings with the refugee to monitor his/her progress in securing a job. This documentation would include contacts with employers to find job opportunities for refugee's and referrals to job sites
 - Follow-ups made after job placement at 30, 60, and 90-day intervals. Documentation would include problems or concerns that arose on the job and what

type of intervention was provided to ensure the success of the placement

- Re-assessments of the refugee's/family self-sufficiency needs
- Documentation of training and instruction provided, the type of instruction, the hours in instruction, the name of the teacher, and the cost per student
- The name of mentors/volunteers involved with the case
- Progress notes of client/service provider contacts in chronological order, dated and signed

1) *Service providers are also responsible to regularly enter data into the Virginia Newcomer Information System (VNIS). VNIS is the statewide data collection system administered by ONS, which captures information on each refugee receiving services through contract service providers.*

2. Employment Services

- a. The initial emphasis in the CRP is to get the refugees employed as soon as possible. However, it also outlines the steps that will be taken to ensure that the refugee will find a job that utilizes his or her skills, has durability, offers health insurance, and provides an adequate level of income to meet the family's needs. Like many American families, it may well be the case that two or more members of the refugee family will have to work to provide enough financial resources to sustain the entire family unit.
- b. The case manager plays a vital role in ensuring that the CRP is being followed and is meeting the needs of the refugee/refugee family. Though monitoring should be ongoing, with contact being made on at least a monthly basis, a review should be done at 30, 60, and 90 days following the development of the initial CRP. These reviews should formally assess the effectiveness of the CRP, making revisions if necessary in light of the goals of self-sufficiency and family stability.

3. English Language Training Services

- a. One of the greatest barriers to self-sufficiency for many refugees is a lack of basic English language skills. The development of a certain level of English proficiency can greatly improve the success of refugee assimilation and resettlement in the United States. This is especially true as it relates to obtaining and retaining employment.

- b. For this reason, English language training must be concurrent with employment and should be worked into the CRP. An assessment of the refugee's English language skills should be done soon after his or her arrival, so that decisions can be made about how best to meet the language needs of the individual or refugee family.
- c. Service providers should ensure that work site ESL programs are used as much as possible so that language learning does not conflict with work and family commitments. Additionally, both ESL and vocational training programs should be provided outside of normal working hours or at times when the greatest number of refugees will be served.

4. Supportive Services

- a. Service providers should work closely with community agencies to provide as many of the services as possible to refugees from section *D.2* above. Though ONS funds a number of these services through contracts with service providers, there are potentially many other possible resources available to refugees in their local communities.
- b. It is the responsibility of the service provider to serve as a source of information and referral for the refugee. In order to do this effectively, strong working relationships must be cultivated with local departments of social services, community action agencies, religious and social institutions, immigrant associations, clinics, schools, and other local organizations which could serve as resources to refugee families in their communities.
- c. Every effort should be made to ensure that refugees are aware of the services available to them and that these services are non-duplicative.
- d. All of the services mentioned in section *D.2* above, which are funded with Office of Refugee Resettlement monies (administered by ONS in Virginia), must be used for refugee-specific programs. Programs designed to offer the following services to refugees may also be extended to individuals who do not fit the definition of a refugee (as established in section *I.C* in this manual) if there is additional space and/or it will positively contribute to the attainment of self-sufficiency for refugees in the program:
 - 1) Vocational or job skills training,

- 2) On-the-job training, and
- 3) English language training

d. ***Community Networking***

1. **Responsibilities of the Refugee Service Provider** – In order for the Comprehensive Resettlement Plan (CRP) to work effectively, it is important to develop early on a network within the community that will serve as a support and resource for the refugee family. As much as possible, service providers should direct refugees to existing public programs and community resources. This should include tapping into the many resources that ethnic organizations offer to refugees.
2. **Responsibilities of the Local Department of Social Services** – The local department of social services also plays an important role as part of this community network that fosters refugee self-sufficiency. It must ensure that refugees and asylees are referred to the local service provider when they are not already affiliated with a local resettlement agency. The local DSS should also work closely with the service provider to integrate the Comprehensive Resettlement Plan into any VIEW work requirements for the refugee. This team approach helps to ensure that the refugee's unique needs and skills are reflected in any employment plan and overall strategy to assist the individual in achieving self-sufficiency.

- e. ***Unaccompanied Minors*** – The Office of Newcomer Services, through a private contract agency, sponsors a program that resettles unaccompanied refugee minors in the state of Virginia. These refugee youth are eligible to receive the full range of services and benefits to which children in foster care in Virginia are entitled, including foster care maintenance and support services. For more information about the Unaccompanied Minors Program, see section VI in this manual.